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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ENVR](#) [ASEC](#) [BL](#) [ECON](#)  
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SUBJECT: NO ELECTION DEAL; MORALES: USG DEATH THREAT

REF: A. LA PAZ 557  
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 496

Classified By: A/EcoPol Chief Charles Sellers for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: After five days of often heated debate, as of 4:00pm April 13, President Evo Morales and his ruling Movement Toward Socialism party (MAS) have been unable to reach a satisfactory compromise with the opposition to pass a constitutionally-mandated Electoral Transition Law (ETL). The two sides are reportedly close to a deal, which would include a significantly updated electoral roll and allow voting by all Bolivians living abroad. Morales, in the midst of a five-day hunger strike, announced he would not attend the Summit of the Americas due to the importance attached to passing the election law, but his spokesman later said he could still attend, pending approval of the law. Morales again unleashed harsh criticism of the USG, saying the DEA tried to poison him in 2002 and that the Embassy is now working with ultra-right wing groups to overthrow him. End summary.

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ETL Update  
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[1](#)2. (C) Although under significant pressure to come to an agreement, after five days of negotiation the opposition-controlled Senate has refused to agree to a compromise Electoral Transition Law (ETL). The ETL establishes the rules for the December 6 election of the president, vice president, and members of the new Plurinational Assembly, but the opposition is concerned the MAS wants to pass a law that would effectively guarantee them a two-thirds majority in the new Plurinational Assembly, and with it the ability to modify the constitution at will (reftels).

[1](#)3. (U) Although the two sides were close to an agreement as early as April 9, they split rapidly after Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera tried to prematurely force a vote when he saw that main opposition negotiators had gathered temporarily in the Congress hall to discuss strategy, creating a quorum. After an exchange of insults, chants of

protest, and an attempt by MAS members to physically prevent the opposition from leaving, the opposition managed to halt the vote and leave the Congress. Upon leaving the building, opposition members including Senate President Oscar Ortiz and Representative Ninoska Lazarte were forced to run a gantlet of MAS deputies who mildly physically attacked and insulted them. Although Garcia Linera proposed a reconsideration of the vote for April 10, the two sides were estranged.

¶4. (U) After negotiating over the Easter weekend, the two sides again moved closer to an agreement that would include among its main features an electoral roll with biometric security features and voting for all Bolivians living abroad.

In the past, the MAS and members of the National Electoral Court (CNE) had insisted that revision of the electoral roll, particularly with advanced security features, would be impossible by the December 6 elections. The MAS had also proposed to "phase in" voting outside Bolivia by enfranchising only Bolivians living in Argentina. The opposition complained that the electoral rolls were fraud-ridden and that Argentina was a significant base of support for the MAS, and refused to cede on these issues. Over the weekend, President Morales suddenly changed course and gave in to both opposition demands, with President Morales agreeing to provide USD 35 million to create a new electoral roll and offer the vote to all Bolivians living abroad. Morales had planned to use the funds to acquire a presidential aircraft.

¶5. (C) Senate President Oscar Ortiz and others are now demanding that CNE President Jose Luis Exeni resign. After stating for months that no major revision of the electoral rolls would be possible before the December 6 elections, Exeni quickly raised eyebrows when he gave his support for the new compromise. His quick endorsement further confirmed opposition suspicions that he is untrustworthy, does whatever is politically expedient, and would try to deliver the elections for the MAS. (Note: Under the old constitution, President Morales selected Exeni to be court president. Although he has shown signs of independence, the opposition considers him Morales' confidant. End note.) According to one opposition source, "momentum has built over the weekend for Exeni's ouster. The MAS is proposing to keep Exeni but add one or two opposition members onto the court as well. This could happen, but the disagreement is prolonging negotiations." Key to any agreement are the votes of opposition Senators Boerth and Ruiz, who have thus far hewed to the opposition agreement to prevent a quorum but are considered moderates and open to MAS persuasion (or bribes).

¶6. (U) Last, late on April 13 the MAS changed its position on the electoral rolls, and is now demanding that anyone be allowed to register for the new electoral roll with any identification document, not only the official carnet as previously agreed.

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Morales Skips Summit?  
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¶7. (U) On April 12, President Morales announced he would attend neither the Summit of the Americas nor the preceding shadow summit of ALBA countries. In a telephone discussion with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, which was broadcast over Bolivian state radio, Morales said "Bolivia comes first.

Let us win this battle for the countryside, which has been oppressed, excluded, and marginalized by the oligarchy. That is our battle." Chavez responded: "This battle of yours is a battle of your people, and it is the battle of our people." Previously, Morales had signaled his desire to attend the Summit of the Americas to challenge President Obama to "lift the Cuban blockade." The next day, Morales' spokesman said he could still attend the Summit, depending on whether a deal on the electoral law is struck.

¶8. (C) Our sources say Morales undertook his hunger strike (now in its fifth day) to gain international sympathy, and because he did not have enough support from social groups or

the military to forcibly close Congress. Similarly, his announcement that he may skip the Summit of the Americas is designed to garner domestic and international support for his fight against the opposition.

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More (Imaginary) Death Threats  
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¶9. (U) Also on April 12, Morales said in an interview broadcast on state television and radio that he had received new information about a DEA plot to poison him in 2002, that there are USG-financed paramilitary units in Santa Cruz working to overthrow him, and that the USG and "fascist right" are actively conspiring to kill him, along with the vice president and ministers. "Perhaps our days are numbered, because they (paramilitaries) continue to prepare themselves. So everyone in the Bolivian countryside should know, if anything happens to Evo, to Alvaro, to a minister, it is the work of the fascist right that is organizing with the support of the Embassy of the United States. We have taken note. This is a battle, a battle of ideas."

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Comment  
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¶10. (C) Post believes President Morales is indeed engaged in a battle of ideas, and that he will continue to work to solidify the "MAS revolution," using the USG as a convenient foil as needed to bolster domestic political support. The opposition's negotiation strategy has yielded significant dividends, and Morales is looking for new ways to be seen as a sympathetic figure, especially among his base. We believe Morales' comments preemptively blaming the U.S. Embassy 'should anything happen to him, the vice president, or any of his ministers' to be not only irresponsible, but potentially a very real security threat to the Mission. We are drafting a diplomatic note to that effect, to be delivered after the Summit of the Americas. In the longer-term, our contacts say the MAS is still heavily favored in the December elections, as voting by Bolivians living abroad favors the MAS and is open to manipulation, despite the updated electoral roll. We will continue to monitor any final election law compromise and the impacts on December elections. End comment.  
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